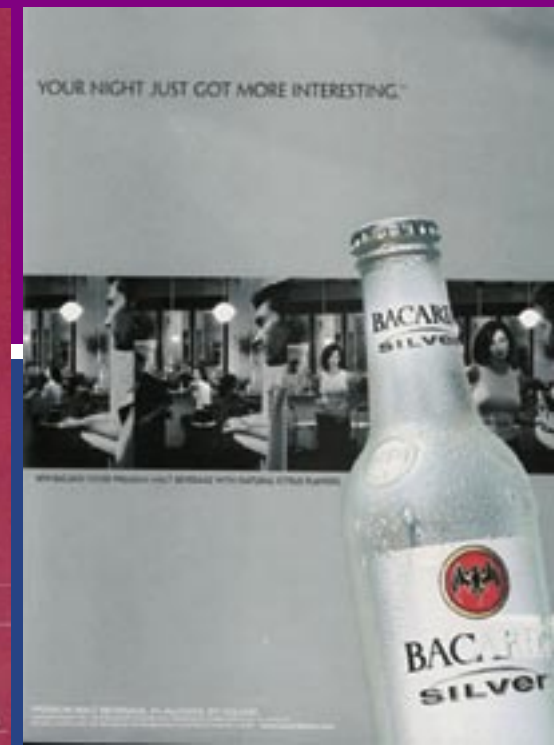


Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

# Prevention File



Alcopops—A Growing Problem  
in More Ways than One

Change Bar Closing Times  
and Reduce Murders

The Time to Purge Binge  
Drinking Is Now

## Alcohol: As Serious as Tobacco and High Blood Pressure

The amount of death and disability caused by alcohol globally is similar to that caused by tobacco and high blood pressure, concludes a review in *The Lancet* (Vol. 365 No. 9458, Feb. 5, 2005). Overall, four percent of the global burden of disease is attributable to alcohol, 4.1 percent to tobacco and 4.4 percent to high blood pressure.

Alcohol is causally related to more than 60 different medical conditions, including breast cancer and coronary heart disease. In most cases alcohol has a detrimental effect on health.

In the review, Robin Room, PhD, of Stockholm University, Sweden, Thomas Babor, PhD, University of Connecticut, and Jürgen Rehm, PhD, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Canada, assess policy research and options for alcohol control. Studies have shown that raising the price and reducing the availability of alcoholic beverages can lower consumption. Using price elasticity estimates and analysis of United Kingdom alcohol-related mortality data the authors estimate that a 10 percent rise in British alcohol prices would produce a drop in cirrhosis mortality of 7 percent in men and 8.3 percent in women and a fall of 28.8 percent in men and 37.4 percent in women in deaths from explicitly alcohol-involved causes (alcohol dependence, poisoning etc.)

Besides price, drinking and alcohol-related problems can be affected by restricting the hours and days of alcohol purchasing and of the numbers and types of outlets. Despite this evidence the authors highlight the fact that research and findings on effective alcohol control measures fail to have an impact on policy decisions.

"A stark discrepancy exists between research findings about the effectiveness of alcohol control measures and the policy options considered by most governments. In many places, the interests of the alcohol industry have effectively

exercised a veto over policies, making sure that the main emphasis is on ineffective strategies such as education," said Room.

### A Step Backward

Widespread reductions in state support for tobacco-prevention programs has led to 23 states to get failing grades for their efforts in tobacco prevention from the American Lung Association. Only five states received a grade of A.

The ALA study found that, although smoking rates have steadily declined since 1997 following the nationwide settlement with Big Tobacco, progress has slowed in the last two years, with cigarette use among 10th-graders last year leveling out and even increasing among 12th-graders.

However, state spending cuts alone may not be the cause. A Campaign For Tobacco-Free Kids study concluded that tobacco companies now spends 23 times the amount on advertising that the states do on prevention. But state spending cuts exacerbate the problem. For example, Florida, once a shining example for effective tobacco prevention, has cut its funding from \$70 million to \$1 million in the past two years.

### No Alcohol? Then What's to Drink?

A growing number of restaurants now enable people who choose not to drink alcohol for whatever reason to take part in their drink and dinner pairings by matching elegant dishes with non-alcoholic beverages such as milk, exotic teas, and unique sodas, according to *The New York Times* (Dec. 22, 2004).

At Per Se, an upscale restaurant in the Time Warner Center in New York and its sister restaurant, the French Laundry in Yountville, CA, tasting dinners meet the needs of recovering alcoholics as well as pregnant women and others who want to limit or avoid alcohol while still enjoying the tasting menu.

During a recent pairings dinner, French Laundry Chef Thomas Keller and Wine and Beverage Director Paul Roberts selected whole milk to pair with tagliatelle with black truffles and butter.

For lobster fricassee, Roberts poured a tart Meyer lemon Gus soda pop. For Coho salmon

roe over a buttery porridge, a chilled chamomile tea was served. For foie gras, the beverage of choice was Boylan root beer.

The trend is beginning to spread across the country. In Houston, Texas, for example, Phillip Mitchell, of Bistro Calais, offers a four-course meal paired with nonalcoholic drinks.

"I guarantee you that in a couple of years this will be a common thing in restaurants nationwide, like vegetarian tasting menus are," Mitchell told the *Times*.

### Antismoking Laws Curb Lung Cancer—in Finland

In the 1970s Finland passed a law that restricted smoking in public places and banned tobacco advertising. According to a Reuters dispatch, researchers from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in Helsinki found that after the Tobacco Act passed in Finland in 1976, the rate of smoking dropped. And when smoking decreased, so did the rate of lung cancer and respiratory diseases.

"The Tobacco Act has been very effective," study author Kari Reijula, MD, told Reuters Health. "The incidence of lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases has started to decrease due to the tobacco legislation."

In response to an increase in smoking-related diseases in the 1960s and 1970s, the Finnish government took legislative steps that banned all tobacco advertising, restricted public smoking, prohibited the sale of tobacco to minors, added health warnings to smoking packages, and used a portion of the tobacco tax revenue for smoking prevention.

The study found that the rate of smoking among men fell from 58 percent to 28 percent between 1960 and 2000. After 1971, the rate of lung cancer among men dropped from 80 cases per 100,000 men to 32 cases per 100,000 men. Likewise, death rates from respiratory disease also fell during the study period.

"In Finland, we are totally convinced that the legislation is the most powerful and effective tool to change the situation in workplaces concerning exposure to tobacco smoke," Reijula said.

Based on these results, Reijula said the most effective components of the Tobacco Act were

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# BEWARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF ALCOPOPS

Why don't the makers of sweet-tasting "alcopops," like **SMIRNOFF ICE**, **BACARDI SILVER**, and **SKYY BLUE**, list calorie content on their labels? It's bad enough that those drinks don't even contain the expensive vodka or rum that their brand names imply. But did you know that one alcopop can stuff you with more calories than a Krispy Kreme donut or a Hostess Twinkie? A couple will load you with more calories than a sirloin steak, and putting away three on Friday night gives you the equivalent of a McDonald's Quarter Pounder and a small order of fries. More calories means more you. So, before you find yourself asking, "Dude – Where's my waist?", get the facts: [www.cspinet.org/alcopops](http://www.cspinet.org/alcopops)

— THE CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST —



# ALCOPOPS— A GROWING PROBLEM IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Alcopops  
are anything  
but harmless,  
cool and  
fashionable.

WITH NAMES  
LIKE SMIRNOFF  
ICE AND MIKE'S

HARD LEMONADE, these malt drinks, with soda pop-like flavors and packaging that mimics soft drinks, are increasingly the beverage of choice for young people, especially girls.

Two nationwide polls conducted by the American Medical Association show that these so-called alcopops are being used by alcohol producers as gateway beverages to attract underage girls to drinking.

"Alcopops are anything but harmless, cool and fashionable," said J. Edward Hill, MD, president-elect of the AMA, who expressed his concern about the targeting of these types of beverages toward youth, especially teenage girls.

"The percentage of girls who drink is on the rise faster than boys, and the average age of their first drink is now 13," he said. "These troubling trends make the aggressive marketing of so-called 'girlie-drinks' even more danger-



ous." The AMA findings are consistent with a recent British study in the United Kingdom that found girls drink more alcopops than boys do.

In addition, the Monitoring the Future survey of 8th, 10th and 12th graders echoes the AMA data on teen drinking rates for alcopops. According to the MTF survey, alcopops continue to have a high prevalence of use among teenagers.

## Alcopop makers would like young people to think that these drinks are made with rum or vodka and are less caloric than beer.

Highlights of the AMA survey are:

- approximately one-third of teen girls report having tried alcopops, and one out of six have done so in the past six months
- 31 percent of teen girls have had alcopops in the past six months, compared to 19 percent of boys

- 51 percent of teen girls have seen alcopop ads; nearly half of all girls aged 16 to 18 report seeing alcopop ads on TV, compared to only 34 percent of women 21 and older
- teen girls report seeing or hearing more alcopop ads on TV, radio, billboards, the Internet and in magazines than women 21 or older do.



### Not for Weight Watchers

The Center for Science in the Public Interest has called attention to another problem related to alcopops—their high calorie count. It says that while Smirnoff Ice, Bacardi Silver, and Skyy Blue don't actually contain any of the vodka or rum associated with their brand names, they do have a lot more calories than their target audience thinks.

In March 2004 CSPI placed ads in college newspapers at America's top party schools, to alert students that just

“Alcopop makers would like young people to think that these drinks are made with rum or vodka and are less caloric than beer,” said George A. Hacker, JD, director of alcohol policies at CSPI. “The reality is that these drinks are just cheap alcohol, artificial flavorings, and lots of added sugar, giving them more calories than beer. Three alcopops have more calories than a McDonald's Quarter Pounder and a small fries.”

While a typical beer has 145 calories, a typical alcopop has more than 220. Bacardi Silver and Skyy Blue each have 235 calories. A five-alcopop night can mean 1,175 calories—almost as many calories than a Quarter Pounder with Cheese, medium French fries, and medium Coke, according to CSPI.

In December, CSPI petitioned the Treasury Department's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to require alcoholic-beverage makers to list calorie contents and other information on a uniform Alcohol Facts label similar to the Nutrition Facts label on foods. Nine in ten Americans support calorie labeling of alcoholic beverages, according to CSPI's polling data. Although then-Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson (since replaced by Mike Leavitt) announced an anti-obesity strategy which includes placing more emphasis on calories, the Administration has not yet supported listing calories on alcoholic beverages.

- teen girls report drinking alcopops more than other alcoholic drinks, whereas women age 21 or older rank the drinks as their least-consumed alcoholic beverage
- nearly one in six teen girls who have consumed alcopops in the past six months have been sexually active after drinking

one alcopop has more calories than a Krispy Kreme donut, and that drinking two alcopops is like downing the caloric equivalent of a sirloin steak. And according to new polling data released by CSPI, most Americans mistakenly think that alcopops have fewer calories than other high-cal foods.

## SPORTS VENUES SHOULD TAKE NOTICE

“So before you find yourself asking, ‘Dude—Where’s my waist?’ get the facts,” the ad urges. The ads and other information about the calorie content of alcopops are available at [cspinet.org/alcopops](http://cspinet.org/alcopops).

### Flavored Malt Beverages or Distilled Spirits?

Alcopops are considered to be malt-based beverages, similar to beer, and for the most part are regulated and marketed like beer products. But what are they really?

According to a report by James F. Mosher, JD, director for the Study of Law and Enforcement Policy at the Pacific Center for Research and Evaluation, here’s how it works: A liquid is derived from malt and it is filtered to remove most or all taste, odor and fermented alcohol. Flavorings, which includes distilled alcohol, are then added to the liquid. The final products derive most of their alcohol content from distilled spirits. In fact a 2003 study conducted by the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Trade Bureau found that of the 144 flavored malt beverages tested 105, or 92 percent, contained over 76 percent alcohol from flavorings that are distilled. Only four brands (3.5 percent) had less than 25 percent alcohol volume from distillation.

It turns out that flavored malt beverages bear little resemblance to other malt beverages. So, why do producers go to so much trouble in the manufacturing process? According to Mosher,

A jury verdict in New Jersey has sent a powerful message to professional and collegiate athletic officials: it’s time they did something about the “culture of intoxication” surrounding spectator sports.

The jury awarded \$135 million to a girl and her mother who were severely injured in a 1999 car crash involving a driver who had just left a New York Giants football game. Aramark, the stadium concessionaire, was held accountable for the fact that the driver who caused the crash had been served beer during the game even though he was obviously drunk.

While the size of the award made headlines, it is not news that heavy drinking is a problem growing hard to hide at sports events drawing big crowds to public stadiums and arenas. Tailgate parties in stadium parking lots assure that some fans are drunk before a game begins. Newspapers frequently report incidents of rowdy behavior by intoxicated fans. The verdict against Aramark points to poor compliance with responsible beverage service practices at concession stands. Big money flowing in from alcohol advertising and promotion is making it hard for professional teams and college athletic departments to turn their backs on alcohol industry support.

There’s a sign that Aramark may have got the message: A few days after the New Jersey verdict, things changed at Pittsburgh’s Heinz Stadium, where the Pittsburgh Steelers were playing the New England Patriots for the AFC championship. Aramark’s beer sales generally have continued until the start of the third quarter of football games. This time, concession stands closed abruptly at halftime.

James Mosher, JD, director of the Center for the Study of Law and Enforcement Policy at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, believes some basic policy reforms could help accelerate change. “Professional sports leagues, teams, stadiums, colleges and vendors need to review and reform their alcohol policies,” he says. “Limiting tailgate parties, prohibiting open containers, restricting the amount of alcohol sold to a single customer, training staff to recognize signs of intoxication, and monitoring staff and customer behavior are among the reforms needed.”

Mosher says The Ohio State University provides an example of how an educational institution can meet this challenge. Last fall OSU banned open containers at tailgate parties before Buckeye football games. The policy did not go down well with some alumni groups, he says, but it brought back a lot of football fans who had been driven away by the drunken atmosphere at games.

Meanwhile, the National Collegiate Athletics Association also may be getting the message. The Board of Directors of the NCAA, which represents some 1,200 athletic organizations, announced early this year that it is reassessing policies on everything from alcohol advertising guidelines to the sale of alcohol in stadiums and arenas.

it's because using a malt base for alcopops has distinct regulatory advantages. For example, as malt-based products alcopops give distillers access to the beer distribution network. Nationally there are three times as many off premise retail outlets that sell beer than those selling distilled spirits. In addition, in control states, where the state operates wholesale and/or retail outlets, the gap between distilled spirits and beer availability can be dramatic, with sales of distilled spirits

restricted to state stores while beer and like products are more widely available in a variety of retail outlets. And, depending on the state, alcopops can be sold at on premise locations that are licensed for beer and wine sales only.

But the biggest regulatory advantage for alcopops is in how they are taxed at both the state and federal levels. Because alcopops are deemed to be malt-based beverages they are taxed by most states and the federal

government as beer. Distilled spirit tax rates can be five to ten times higher by volume than beer taxes, a big difference that helps keep the prices of alcopops low compared to distilled spirits. According to Mosher, keeping prices low is an important marketing consideration because research has repeatedly shown that higher prices mean lower sales, particularly among price-sensitive young drinkers.

## Revenue Losses

Low prices are not the only impact of the beer tax rates imposed on alcopops. Mosher estimates that the lower beer tax rates has resulted in an imputed annual tax underpayment at the federal government and in 29 states in 2002 of \$373,604,906. In time of budget deficits and spending cuts that's a lot of money by anyone's reckoning, especially when the human and community costs of alcohol consumption

are estimated at \$56 billion a year. According to Mosher, only eight states and the District of Columbia appear to be taxing Flavored Malt Beverage—the industry term for alcopops—appropriately.

According to Mosher, the marketing practices used by FMB producers are grounded in a fundamental violation of federal and most state laws—FMBs should be legally classified as distilled spirits rather than as beer. “This misclassification has been documented by the

lead federal agency responsible for regulating alcohol products, yet the agency has failed to take any enforcement action against violators. Instead it has expressly permitted continuing violations of law. State agencies with independent authority to enforce similar violations of state law have tacitly accepted the federal agency's action within the state context. As a result, the marketing practices likely to encourage youth consumption unabated,” says Mosher.

And the recently promulgated TTB regula-

tions on FMBs, long anticipated by those hoping to correct their misclassification, will not do much to help reduce the problems associated with FMBs. The TTB regulations allow up to 50 percent of the alcohol in FMBs to be derived from distilled spirits. That means in a product with 5 percent alcohol, up to 2.5 percent of the alcohol can be derived from distilled spirits. In 2003 the agency proposed a rule that only would have allowed only .5 percent distilled alcohol in the products, with the remainder having to come from malt in order to be treated as a beer.

“This is a huge victory for the distillers. In fact, the beer industry wanted the .5 percent rule. The TTB based its ruling entirely on the potential adverse impact of the .5 percent rule on small producers, even though large producers dominate the market. And the ruling fails to even mention public health concerns, the fact that it is contrary to BATF's previous ruling, and violates the plain language of the federal statute,” said Mosher.

Mosher suggests that those concerned about addressing youth consumption consider learning from the experience of tobacco litigation, which “gained traction when plaintiffs could show affirmative acts of malfeasance, such as the tobacco industry's manipulation of nicotine levels to promote addiction and industry memoranda documenting its intent to market to young children,”

“Evidence that FMB producers have violated federal and state laws regarding the product's classification may address this key lesson from the tobacco litigation experience,” says Mosher.



*For more information on alcopops visit [cspinet.org/booze](http://cspinet.org/booze).*

**Alcopops are considered to be malt-based beverages, similar to beer, and for the most part are regulated and marketed like beer products. But what are they really?**





# Change Bar Closing Times and Reduce Murders

By Kathryn Stewart

**THE TOWN OF DIADEMA IN BRAZIL HAS REDUCED ITS MURDER RATE BY ALMOST HALF**

in the last few years—mostly by establishing 11 PM as the closing hour for bars and other places that sell alcohol for on-premises consumption. About 273 lives were saved in the two years following the change in policy, according to a study from researchers at the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Berkeley, CA, who worked with government officials from Diadema to document the effects of the policy change.

Diadema is a low-income city of over 350,000 people located south of São Paulo that had high rates of homicides, assaults, vehicle crashes and gang violence. When officials studied police records, they noted that many of

these crimes occurred late at night and involved people who had been drinking. Until July 2002 bars were not required by law to have a closing time. That changed when a municipal went

into effect prohibiting on-premise alcohol sales between the hours of 11 PM and 6 AM.

Political leaders in Diadema worked vigorously both before and after the policy change to ensure that it had broad public support and was well enforced. A public opinion poll carried out before the policy change showed a community approval rate for the new policy of 83 percent.

Following adoption of the municipal law, city officials distributed colorful brochures and used local news media to publicize the law. According to recent surveys 98 percent of Diadema residents know about the law, and 93 percent support the new alcohol policy.

**Research has shown over and over that alcohol and violence are inextricably linked.**



**When researchers analyzed murder rates in Diadema from January 1995 to July 2004 they found a reduction in the per capita homicide rate of more than 46 percent.**

Six months prior to scheduled adoption of the new alcohol policy, the municipal civil guard visited most alcohol retailers and discussed with the owners the proposed new law and its application to alcohol sales. Later, owners were asked to sign a declaration that they were aware of the law and the legal consequences of violations. Civil guard officers carry out enforcement operations each evening. An important component of the enforcement strategy includes regular meet-

ings and reports to officers of the municipal civil guard on the effectiveness of enforcement in reducing community violence and informing officers directly of the survey data documenting citizen support for their enforcement efforts.

When researchers analyzed murder rates in Diadema from January 1995 to July 2004, they found a reduction in the per capita homicide rate of more than 46 percent. In addition, assaults against women dropped by



## NEW DUI PROBLEM?

It's called Dialing Under the Influence. That's when people reach for their phones after they have had one too many. A recent survey by Virgin Mobile Australia of more than 400 people found that 95 percent made phone calls after a drinking session, with 30 percent of calls going to exes and 19 percent to current partners.

The survey also found that 54 percent make one to three calls a night, 35 percent dial under the influence more than once a week and 37 percent more than once a month. And the next day 55 percent reach for their phones to check who they dialed the night before.


To stop people from making phone calls they may later regret, Virgin Mobile has launched a new service called Dialing Under the Influence. Subscribers can dial 333 plus the phone number they don't want to call when drunk and Virgin Mobile will then stop all calls to that number by blacklisting it until 6 AM the following morning for a fee of 25 cents (Australian) per call.

Virgin Mobile says its dialing under the influence service will prevent incoherent calls to ex-partners, current partners or bosses.

more than 25 percent, though this reduction was not statistically significant.

"A wealth of research shows that policies that change how alcohol is sold can be highly effective in preventing alcohol related problems. This is another example of how those policies can work," said Joel Grube, PhD, director of the Prevention Research Center and one of the study's authors.

"Research has shown over and over that alcohol and violence are inextricably linked. The results of Diadema's efforts provide important evidence that this relationship need not be accepted passively. Local communities have it within their power to prevent alcohol-related violence," said another study author Robert Reynolds, of the Pacific Institute in Calverton, MD.

Get the full report *Prevention of Murders in Diadema, Brazil: The Influence of New Alcohol Policies* visit [resources.prev.org](http://resources.prev.org) or contact Stewart at [stewart@pire.org](mailto:stewart@pire.org) 

*Kathryn Stewart is the director of the dissemination component at the Prevention Research Center.*

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**About 273 lives were saved in the two years following the change in policy, according to a study from researchers at the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Berkeley, CA.**

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## EXTEND DRINKING HOURS, REDUCE PROBLEMS?

In Great Britain some people, including the governing Labour Party, think that binge drinking and violence are the unintended consequence of restricted licensing hours. The answer, no required closing times. Advocates of 24-hour licences argue that the state has for generations unintentionally encouraged the public to drink too much, too fast, in the time allowed—leading to rowdiness at closing time.

But not everyone thinks that the 24-hour opening allowed in the new licensing laws, which are supposed to come into effect at the end of 2005, is a good idea.

For example, the Royal College of Physicians attacked the 24-hour drinking law, warning that it will cost the National Health Service millions of pounds and lead to hospitals being swamped by injured drinkers at weekends. The college claims that the reform will enable more people to drink to excess and result in more alcohol-related violence and injuries for emergency departments to deal with. It also foresees an increase in problems such as liver disease, putting a further burden on the health service, according to a report in the *Telegraph* (Feb.1, 2005).

Robin Touquet, an accident and emergency consultant at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, a London neighborhood, who is a specialist in alcohol abuse, said: "If you look at where legislation has already been introduced for round-the-clock drinking—namely Ireland and Australia—the results speak for themselves. Ireland and Australia have seen a huge increase in alcohol consumption, and attendances at accident and emergency departments have also soared.

"There are those who think you'll get a Mediterranean cafe-type atmosphere. But you only need to look at the city centres, or listen to the police, to see that the Anglo-Saxon culture is binge drinking, and increased availability only makes it worse," said Touquet in the *Telegraph*.

However, in contrast to France or Italy, where alcohol consumption has decreased, the per capita drinking rates in England and Wales have increased by 50 percent since the 1970s. Not only do the British drink more; they're drinking at a younger age and consume more at one sitting—they've become, all too often, binge drinkers. Since 1998, violent crimes have increased by 83 percent and, according to the police, alcohol is largely to blame for it. A 2004 government report estimated that alcohol misuse cost 20 billion pounds sterling (\$37.6 billion) per year in crime, loss of productivity and social and health costs. ☐





# The Time to Purge Binge Drinking is Now

By Dwayne Proctor



A NEW YEAR AND A NEW SEMESTER HAVE ARRIVED ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES and while many

students will be focused on starting classes and getting reacquainted with friends, many a college dean will be spending at least a few moments pondering these grim thoughts: “will anybody die on campus this semester from an alcohol overdose” and “will drunken students spark a riot?”

The concern is not one borne of paranoia. It’s a reflection of reality, particularly if you’re a dean in Colorado. During the fall semester of 2004, four Colorado college students and one high school student died after episodes of binge drinking. And at Colorado State, where two of the deaths occurred, the fall semester opened with an alcohol-fueled riot.

The latest incident at Colorado State provides a particularly tragic example of the intractable nature of binge drinking. In mid-December, 20-year-old Bennett Bertoli was found dead of an apparent alcohol overdose. His death occurred as binge drinking awareness was at an all-time high throughout the state’s universities. It had been more than two months since three other Colorado college students had died

of alcohol poisoning and less than a week since a Colorado high school student had suffered the same fate.

In fact, only a few days before Bertoli died, students and administrators from 17 of the state’s universities, along with alcohol abuse experts, held a forum in Denver to discuss the problems caused by excessive drinking on campus.

Of course the problem is not confined to Colorado and the tragedies caused by students abusing alcohol are not confined to fatal overdoses. If the past is prologue, by the time all the data is in we can expect that 1,400 college students will have died during the 2004-2005 school year in alcohol-related incidents. We can also expect 500,000 injuries, 70,000 sexual assaults, and 110,000 arrests will be linked to alcohol abuse.

If this was a classic disease generating such statistics, you could be certain that the response would be massive and comprehensive. How many more students must die—or be assaulted by drunk classmates—before we decide to stop treating binge drinking as a collegiate rite of passage and confront it as the serious public-health threat that it is?

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**While alcohol itself is a legal product that can be used responsibly by adults, many colleges foster a peculiar “alcohol culture.” This environment both encourages and enables irresponsible and often underage drinking.**

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While alcohol itself is a legal product that can be used responsibly by adults, many colleges foster a peculiar “alcohol culture.” This environment both encourages and enables irresponsible and often underage drinking.

How many adults typically walk out of their homes or offices to be greeted by giant posters of buxom beer-drinking twins, or leaflets advertising dime drafts, 25-cent highballs, and sweet but potent shots with enticing names like “Sex on the Beach,” the “Bionic Beaver,” and the “Mind Eraser”? Yet this was exactly the scene encountered by Denver Post reporters when they chronicled the environment that still prevails in the commercial areas surrounding the University of Colorado and Colorado State in the wake of recent student deaths. As the article aptly stated, “a smorgasbord of cheap and seductive incentives to get plastered greet Colorado college students, and many dig in with glee.”

The Harvard School of Public Health estimates that 44 percent of college students regularly binge drink. Imagine if four out of ten adults engaged in such behavior, like going out four or five nights during the work week to gulp down six or seven beers, knock back several shots of liquor, and then head home for a nightcap? Yet such a daily scenario is played out weekly across the country involving thousands of college students, many under the legal age to purchase alcohol.

So how do we begin to address this epidemic of underage binge drinking? A good place to start is by encouraging university administrators to implement comprehensive programs like A Matter of Degree (AMOD), a national effort to reduce high-risk drinking among college students administered by the American Medical Association. AMOD calls for universities and the communities of which they are a part to support environmental changes that de-emphasize alcohol as a part of college life, such as enforcement of minimum drinking-age laws and limiting access to low-cost, high-volume drink specials.

Thus far, the AMOD program has focused on providing grants to schools where there are a particularly large number of students, 50 percent or more, reporting that they have engaged in binge drinking. In exchange for the support, the schools agree to institute certain programs. For example, they agree to organize a community coalition that brings students, faculty members, local government officials, parents, police, local businesses and prevention experts literally around the same table to discuss the problem and explore solutions.

The university communities now participating in AMOD include:

- Florida State University-The City of Tallahassee, Florida
- Georgia Institute of Technology-The City of Atlanta, Georgia

## ENFORCEMENT IS IMPORTANT

Communities are being urged to crack down on enforcement of sales-to-minors laws as a means of reducing alcohol use by young people and the problems that result. A new study provides evidence that these prevention strategies work.

The Oregon Research Institute at Eugene surveyed nearly 17,000 11th graders to find out how the sources of alcohol available to them affected various behaviors—how frequently they drank, if at all; heavy episodic or “binge” drinking; alcohol use at school, and drinking and driving or riding with a drinking driver. The survey sought to determine whether those who obtained alcohol from a store or gas station, for example, drank more or less than those who got their alcohol from a friend.

Overall, 30 percent of the drinkers got their alcohol from a commercial source and the rest from “social sources,” friends both over 21 and under 21 years of age, as well as parents. The survey found that higher rates of commercial access in their communities led to higher levels of alcohol use and associated problems. Stronger enforcement of minor-in-possession laws was related to lower levels of alcohol use and heavy drinking, but not to lower levels of drinking in school or drinking and driving. Authors of the survey said the findings provide support for the value of local efforts to increase control over youth access to alcohol and greater enforcement of minor-in-possession laws.

“We found that for general alcohol use and binge drinking frequency, those communities with higher access rates also had adolescents who used friends under 21 and parent sources more often, in addition to the increased use of commercial sources. The increased use of friends under 21 certainly could be the indirect result of more youth suppliers who themselves obtained the alcohol from commercial sources.”

“The increased reliance on parent sources, however, may reflect a community-wide tolerance for adolescent drinking, as evidenced by both commercial availability and adult provision of alcohol.”

- Lehigh University-The City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
- Louisiana State University-The City of Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- University of Colorado-The City of Boulder, Colorado
- University of Delaware-The City of Newark, Delaware
- University of Iowa-Iowa City, Iowa
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln-The City of Lincoln, Nebraska
- University of Vermont-The City of Burlington, Vermont
- University of Wisconsin-The City of Madison, Wisconsin

In September of 2004, the Harvard School of Public Health released a study evaluating the success of the program thus far. What it found is that in the five university communities that implemented most of the AMOD-designed policies and environmental changes there was significant progress in modifying drinking behaviors and reducing alcohol-related harms. This progress did not occur in the communities that implemented fewer changes or at a group of colleges that were not involved with AMOD,

evidence that  
dealing with student drinking

problems requires commitment to a carefully  
structured, multifaceted, long-term program.

For the communities where AMOD produced improvements, incidents of binge drinking, frequent intoxication, and those reporting either taking up binge drinking in college or “usually bingeing while drinking” fell by between 5 and 11 percent. Also, students who drank at these schools reported an 18 percent reduction in experiencing alcohol-related problems, such as missing class or getting hurt. Students also reported a reduction in alcohol related disruptions.

Some of the interventions that appeared to be effective include:

- instituting mandatory training programs that focus on responsible beverage service;
- instituting a registration system for people who purchase kegs;
- prohibiting anyone from selling alcohol without a license;
- removing alcohol-related items from student bookstores;
- expanding the number of substance-free residence halls; and

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28 May - 3 June, 2005

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- promoting a range of alcohol-free activities.

It's fair to say that the improvements gained by school communities that diligently pursue the AMOD programs are not dramatic. Nonetheless, the progress is unmistakable and it is occurring in an area that has been so stubbornly resistant to change.

But AMOD is not the only tool available to confront alcohol abuse in university settings. Administrators and policy makers should also review evidence-based studies that document how high-volume, low-price alcohol promotions in the college environment can fuel binge drinking. The results suggest that policies aimed at curtailing such activities could help

reduce gross over-consumption of alcohol and its damaging effects.

What is needed most, however, is a greater sense of urgency, an insistence that the status quo of 1,400 young deaths each year is unacceptable, that half-hearted efforts will bring little change, and that this is not simply a matter of a "rite of passage" or personal responsibility. Indeed, the National Academy of Sciences, among America's most respected research organizations, in a 2003 report called underage drinking a "collective responsibility."

For college administrators, students, parents, alumni, politicians, and society in gen-

eral, the time has come to choose: Do we want to cultivate institutions of higher learning or of lower expectations and harder drinking? Opportunities abound to make a difference. What's missing is a concerted will to act. The death toll will be a testament to our timidity. □

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*Dwayne Proctor, PhD, MA, is a senior communications officer at The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which supports the "A Matter of Degree" program. Proctor was formerly on the faculty of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine.*



# WHAT KIDS ARE UP TO IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE WHEN IT COMES TO DRUG USE

**The study suggests, for instance, that 15 year olds in Denmark are more likely to be drinkers than those in any other European country**

A DECLINE IN DRINKING BY AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS that began in 2001

appears to have reversed itself in 2004. Use of marijuana by teen-agers is declining, but use of inhalants may be on the rise. Cigarette smoking by American teens has been declining since the mid-1990s, but in the last two years the rate of decline has slowed.

Those were some of the findings in the 2004 Monitoring the Future study of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by 8th, 10th and 12th graders in the United States. The study released late last year is fertile ground for considering

the effectiveness—or lack of it—of prevention strategies. Adding interest to the MTF data is the release at the same time of findings of a similar study in Europe—the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD). The study suggests, for instance, that 15 year olds in Denmark are more likely to be drinkers than those in any other European country, that Greenland has the highest percentage of teen-age smokers, and that youths in the Czech Republic rank first in use of marijuana or hashish.

Although the European youths and their American counterparts were sitting for a snapshot of their substance use at about the same time,



## BEST AND BRIGHTEST?

Tobacco companies appear to be doubling the number of smokers on college campuses by sponsoring parties where free cigarettes are handed out to students. This was a finding in a recent study by the Harvard School of Public Health on the impact of on-campus and off-campus social events sponsored by the tobacco industry.

"By distributing cigarettes and sponsoring these events in bars and on college campuses, the tobacco industry promotes the idea that cigarettes are an essential part of young adults' social lives," says Nancy Rigotti, MD, a tobacco researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital.

As reported in the January 2005 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, the study questioned a random sample of 10,904 students enrolled in 119 four-year colleges and universities around the United States. Students at all but one college said they had attended a social event sponsored by a tobacco company during 2001, and those who attended the parties were more likely to be current smokers.

A key finding involved the 78 percent of students who did not smoke regularly before the age of 19. Among these students, 23.7 percent of students had attended a promotional event where free packages of cigarettes were given to the guests. Among the same classification of students, the smoking prevalence among those who had never attended such a promotional event was only 11.8 percent.

Henry Wechsler, PhD, author of the study, said the findings should serve as a wake-up call to college and university administrators. "The evidence that these events may influence a non-smoking young person's decision to start smoking is a good reason they should be alert to tobacco-industry sponsorship of these events and take appropriate action on their campuses."

Meanwhile a new report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) suggests that the nation is making headway in efforts to discourage smoking by young people before they reach college age. More and more tobacco retailers are getting in step with federal efforts to keep cigarettes out of the hands of children.

SAMHSA says the national rate of retailers found to be selling tobacco to children under 18 had dropped to 12.8 percent in 2004. This is down from 14.1 percent in 2003, and a substantial decline from the 40.1 percent rate reported in 1996. The statistics are drawn from reports to the federal government required under the Synar Amendment, which requires the states and territories to adopt and implement regulations designed to reduce tobacco sales to youngsters.

there are some differences in the two survey programs. While ESPAD gathers its data only once every four years, the Monitoring the Future survey is conducted annually. While ESPAD targets only 15 year olds in 35 European countries, MTF looks at student behavior in three age groups in schools throughout the United States and includes no breakdown by geographic areas. Both the Europeans and Americans base their findings on anonymous questionnaires containing similar questions.

Lloyd D. Johnston, PhD, of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, has long been associated with the Monitoring the Future study as its principal investigator and he helped develop ESPAD with European social researchers in the 1990s.

"We wanted to develop a research protocol that could measure substance use validly across various cultures in Europe, and we tried to do so in ways that paralleled the Monitoring the Future work here," he told *Prevention File*. "ESPAD focuses more on alcohol use, since that tends to be a larger problem for youth in European countries than in the United States—believe it or not—but ESPAD includes the range of illicit drugs as well."

The 44 percent of 15-year-olds in the Czech Republic who have used marijuana or hashish compares with 35 percent of American 10th graders—about the same age—who have smoked pot. Only American 12th graders equal the young Czechs in pot-smoking experience.

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**Frequent drinking is most prevalent among students in the western parts of Europe, such as the British Isles, the Netherlands, and Belgium, but also in Austria, the Czech Republic and Malta.**

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On the whole, Europe's 15 year olds are less likely to have used any kind of illegal drugs than their American counterparts. Johnston believes this phenomenon goes back to American experience in the Vietnam war and the youth alienation it gave rise to. "This acted as a strong catalyst to certain forms of illicit drug use here," he said. "In addition, American youth have a lot of discretionary income and a lot of physical independence with high rates of car ownership."

Youths on both sides of the Atlantic may be influenced by a mix of factors in choosing their behavior toward alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Robin Room, PhD, director of the Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs in Stockholm, Sweden, says he finds it hard to see any direct correlation between a country's alcohol policies and the trends in drinking noted in ESPAD surveys every four years. If drinking or other drug use is on the rise in any country, it may well be due to "general social changes and an improved general economy," he told *Prevention File*. For instance, a rise in beer drinking by teen-agers in some traditionally wine-

drinking European countries may reflect "a generational reaction against their elders."

In 30 of the 35 countries surveyed by ESPAD, a majority of the students said they had been drunk at least once, and those in Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Finland and the Isle of Man had been drunk 20 times or more in their lifetimes. The lowest rates for drunkenness were found in Cyprus, France, Greece, Portugal and Turkey. The latter country, with its Muslim traditions, was the lowest in all measures of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use.



## ANOTHER AIR TRAVEL PERIL

Chalk up another consequence of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001: Air travelers may be suffering greater exposure to second-hand smoke.

This becomes apparent in the results of a survey of the smoke-free policies of U.S. airports conducted in the fall of 2002 by the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit.

The bad news is that airports handling the most passengers are the least likely to have smoke-free policies, and the tightened security regulations since 9/11 are requiring passengers to spend more time in airline terminals, thus making it more likely they will be exposed to second-hand smoke.

The Airport Smoking Policy Survey found that airport size is inversely related to the likelihood that smoking will be prohibited in the terminal. Only 42 percent of "large hub" airports have smoke-free policies although these airports and their terminals handle nearly 70 percent of airline passengers. As airports get smaller, their smoking policies grow more stringent. About 53 percent of medium-hub airports and 58 percent of small-hub airports are smoke-free. The 51 airports considered "non-hub" are the most likely to have smoke-free policies with 81 percent of them in that category. In the survey, an airport was considered smoke-free if smoking was flatly prohibited "by anyone, anywhere, and at any time inside the airport."

The survey noted that an estimated 1.9 million workers have jobs at U.S. airports, another 1.9 million people pass through airports every day as passengers. "Increased adoption and enforcement of smoke-free policies are needed to protect the health of workers and travelers," the survey concluded.

While 62 percent of all airports are ranked as smoke-free, there are varying degrees of control on smoking in other airports that permit it. Some have designated smoking areas that are enclosed or physically separated from the rest of the airport, but public health authorities point to shortcomings in such arrangements. Smoke may drift from smoking to no-smoking areas and smoke-contaminated air is recirculated through a common ventilation system in most building where smoking is allowed.

Authors of the survey pointed out that since 2002, more states have adopted legislation requiring that all workplaces within their borders be smoke-free. As these laws take effect it will increase the number of smoke-free airports among the total.

Frequent drinking is most prevalent among students in the western parts of Europe, such as the British Isles, the Netherlands, and Belgium, but also in Austria, the Czech Republic and Malta. Very few students in the northern parts of Europe drink as often as those elsewhere. Illegal drug use is dominated by use of marijuana and hashish, with frequent use mainly reported in countries in the central and western parts of Europe. Next to marijuana and hashish, the illegal drug used most frequently by European teens is Ecstasy.

ESPAD breaks down its findings into substance use by boys and girls. One finding is that drinking beer is predominantly male behavior in most countries, but there are two exceptions. In Greenland and Iceland, girls and boys in almost equal proportions report frequent beer drinking. Boys outnumber girls in use of marijuana and hashish but the gender differences are small in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greenland, Hungary, Iceland, Russia, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

In the United States, the Monitoring the Future study was notable in its finding that the use of illegal drugs among teen-agers appears to be continuing a decline. The decline has been occurring since 1996 among 8th graders in the annual study, and since 2002 among 10th and 12th graders as well. In 2004, only 15 percent of 8th graders had 31 percent of 10th



**The proportion of young people who believe it is dangerous to use inhalants has declined among 8th and 10th graders over the past three years, and this year there was a rise in use at all three grade levels.**



graders and 39 percent of 12th graders had tried an illegal drug.

Over the past two years there has been an increase in the proportion of students seeing marijuana use as dangerous. “Quite possibly the media campaign aimed at marijuana use that has been undertaken by the White House Office of Drug Control Policy, in collaboration with the Partnership for a Drug Free America, has been having its intended effect,” said MTF’s Lloyd Johnston.

But the survey is seeing an opposite trend where inhalants are concerned. The proportion of young people who believe it is dangerous to use inhalants has declined among 8th and 10th graders over the past three years, and this year there was a rise in use at all three grade levels. This trend, says Johnston, suggests a need for greater attention to the dangers of inhalant use in media messages and prevention programs aimed at teens.

Trends are not as clear where alcohol is concerned. Drinking by teens went down in the 2002 survey—the first after the 9/11 attacks—but the surveys since then have not shown as much decline. In 2004, drinking and drunkenness by 12th graders showed a slight but not statistically significant increase. “We’ll have to wait for another year to see if this increase in 12th grade is a real one, or just a blip in the data,” Johnston said.

Monitoring the Future found good news and bad news where cigarette smoking by young people is concerned. On the one hand, the number of American teens who are current smokers has con-

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**We know that young people have come to see cigarette smoking as more dangerous, while they also have become less accepting of cigarette use, and these changes continued in 2004.**

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tinued a decline that began in the mid-1990s. The bad news is that the rate of this decline has decelerated sharply in the past two years, and the number of teen smokers is still substantial. The 2004 survey found 25 percent of 12th graders reported smoking in the prior 30 days, along with 16 percent of 10th graders and 9 percent of 8th graders.

The favorable turnaround in youth smoking rates began around 1996, and researchers studying the trend have identified a number of factors that may be contributing to the decline:

- Adverse publicity targeting the tobacco industry.
- The “master settlement” agreement between the state attorneys general and the tobacco companies that led to a number of changes in marketing practices.
- A sharp rise in cigarette prices, partly as a result of the industry’s need to recoup monies lost in the settlement.
- The ending of the “Joe Camel” logo as an advertising image.
- The ending of billboard advertising of tobacco as part of the settlement.
- The initiation of anti-smoking ads by a number of states and nationally by the American Legacy Foundation, which was created and funded under the settlement.

“We know that young people have come to see cigarette smoking as more dangerous, while they also have become less accepting of

cigarette use, and these changes continued in 2004,” Johnston said. He noted that the proportion of 12th graders who say they prefer to date people who do not smoke rose from 64 percent in 1977 to 72 percent in 2002, and it remains at that level. “When smoking makes a teen less attractive to the great majority of the opposite sex, as now appears to be the case, one of the long-imagined benefits for adolescent smoking is seriously undercut.”

Johnston sees forces working for and against a continuation of the decline in youth smoking.

“Whether we will see teen smoking continue to decline in the future is likely to depend on what actions society and the tobacco companies take,” he said. “The fact that a number of states have reduced their allocations of tobacco settlement monies to smoking prevention is likely to have an adverse effect, as is the scheduled decline in funding for the national anti-smoking campaign sponsored by the American Legacy Foundation.

“If more states and municipalities decide to raise tobacco taxes, that likely will bring youth smoking rates lower, based on past experience. And if the tobacco companies avoid marketing techniques aimed at youth, I think that can make a big difference. However, their advertising and promotion expenditures have actually grown considerably in recent years.” □

Continued from inside front cover

likely the ban on smoking in public places, the hike in tobacco taxes, the prohibiting of the sale of tobacco to minors.

### Smoking Controls Down Under

New Zealand is the third country in the world to ban smoking in bars and restaurants, following Norway, Ireland and a host of cities in the United States in banning smoking in licensed premises to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

According to a Reuters dispatch, the new law extends a 1990 ban on smoking in offices, shops and public buildings to pubs, clubs, restaurants, casinos and school grounds, as well limiting the display of tobacco products in shops.

Under the new law, bar and restaurant owners are liable to fines of up to NZ\$400 (\$286) if they do not take reasonable steps to stop people smoking indoors.

### Nyet on Beer

Russian legislators are taking a hard stance on beer in an effort to cut down on growing beer consumption and related problems. In the last five years, beer consumption has doubled in Russia, especially among the younger generation, making it the fastest growing beer market in the world after China.

Beer advertising is now banned between 7 AM and 10 PM. In 2005 a second part of that bill will come into force banning the use of animals, cartoons and humans in adverts. Spirits advertising is already banned on TV. And advertisements must spend 10 percent of the time to warn against the dangers of harmful consumption.

Another law bans beer drinking on the street and in stadiums, parks, public transport and other public sites except restaurants and places selling draught beer.

Smoking has also come under attack, with the approval in the upper house of the Duma recently approving a new smoking ban. The bill

bans lighting up on public transport and at the workplace and also the sale of tobacco in health, sports and cultural centers or near schools, according to a Reuters dispatch.

### Fire-Safe Cigarettes in Canada

Not the least of the problems associated with cigarettes is the fires that they start, resulting in injuries, death and property damage. Under a new Canadian law aimed at preventing house fires caused by a smoker's carelessness, starting October 1, 2005 tobacco companies are required to sell fire-safe cigarettes. That means they will have to change their manufacturing standards and make cigarettes that are designed to burn out safely if left unattended.

In Canada, such fires kill and injure hundreds of people and cause millions of dollars in property damage each year. The Canadian government estimates that the regulations will save 18 to 36 lives annually, prevent 77 to 155 injuries, and reduce property damage by \$9.5 million to \$19 million each year.

Canada is the first country in the world to require fire-safe cigarettes. In the United States, only New York requires fire-safe cigarettes. Other countries, including Australia, Britain and New Zealand, are closely watching Canada's plan and may follow suit.



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## Ten Years Ago in *Prevention File* (Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter 1995)

### SEE YOU IN COURT!

A NEW STRATEGY IS MAKING AN APPEARANCE in the historic encounter between health advocates and the tobacco industry. The principal battlefield may be shifting from legislative halls to courtrooms. Cigarette companies and their adversaries both are turning to lawsuits as a new weapon.

For those concerned with the prevention of smoking-related disease. This is a mixture of good news and bad. On the plus side, judges and juries are off limits for the kind of lobbying and gift-giving that have made law-making bodies roll over to the will of the tobacco companies. In court, issues have a better chance of being decided on their legal merits rather than backroom political deals.

On the other hand, well-heeled tobacco conglomerates have the resources to hire top legal talent and meet unlimited litigation costs when they are defendants in legal actions or file suits in their own behalf. Their adversaries often are individuals or public-interest groups with limited budgets and a dependence on lawyers donating their time.

Who comes out ahead in these toe-to-toe legal battles may take years to determine. Some observers believe tobacco companies may be heading for the same fate that overtook the Manville Corp., the major U.S. producers of asbestos. That company went into bankruptcy in the 1980s in the face of an avalanche of personal injury claims stemming from the use of asbestos in insulation. Tobacco industry leaders have pooh-poohed the comparison, pointing

to the success of cigarette makers in winning damage suits brought against them by ailing smokers or their survivors.

But the new lawsuits are entering unexplored legal territory. Perhaps the most innovative suit is one filed last May by the State of Mississippi, which argues that cigarette companies should reimburse the state and its taxpayers for the cost of treating Medicaid clients who developed respiratory illness as a result of smoking cigarettes. Florida, West Virginia and other states are taking a similar route, exposing the tobacco industry to a potential of billions of dollars in liability judgments.

In Mississippi, lawyers in the state attorney general's office believe their suit on behalf of taxpayers has more of a chance of success than lawsuits that attempt to recover damages

on behalf of individual victims of cigarette smoking. Cigarette companies have won cases in the past with the argument that smokers were aware of the health risks associated with tobacco and decided to smoke anyhow.

"In our suit there's a huge difference," Assistant Attorney General Trey Bobinger told *Prevention File*. "There can't be an acceptance of risk argument. The citizen who pays the medical bills for smokers doesn't have a choice of whether or not to use tobacco. This isn't a case of where the defense lawyers can thump the table and say, 'you smoked three packs a day for 30 years and now you come here asking us for money—what did you expect?'"

Facts speak for themselves. People who do not smoke are in fact helping pay the medical bills for people who do. As research continues to confirm the link between tobacco and illness, the Mississippi suit and others like it pose an important question for judges and juries. Who should pay the bill for treating tobacco-related disease? There is a compelling argument that the cost should come out of the profits from the sale of cigarettes—and certainly not from the pocketbooks of people who don't smoke.

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*Editor's note: Lawsuits against the tobacco companies have had checkered results, whereas measures to raise taxes have been more successful. For more information on tobacco control measure go to [tobaccofreekids.org](http://tobaccofreekids.org). See also "Going down Tobacco Road when it Comes to Taxes" (*Prevention File*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Fall 2004).*

